

# CONSUMERS' *Guide*

Volume IV, No. 4

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## Melons Come to Market

# CONSUMERS' Guide

Issued every two weeks by the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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WE WOULD LIKE to take a poll of our own. A recent issue of an important trade paper gives some "Don'ts—VERY Special Don'ts" to salesmen of a certain line of rugs. One of these "Don'ts" reads this way: "No lecturing, please. A sale is a two-way transaction. Don't bore your customer with an overdose of information. Take a tip from automobile selling. Remember—chromium trim, upholstery, streamlining, and niceties of designing sell a woman an automobile. She doesn't care what's under the hood. Apply this same slant to your (trade name of rug). Discussion of loom weaving, details of construction, and so on, constitute technical jargon that bores most women." . . . Our poll would ask: Does it bore *you*? Or would you like to be able to choose your rug on the basis of information stated on the labels and in the advertising of rugs made by another manufacturer? These labels give facts on weave, materials, content (percentage of wool and cotton), dyes, yarn, pitch (number of tufts per inch across), wires (number of rows of tufts per inch lengthwise), shot (number of weft yarns "shot" across the loom to bind the tufts in the back of the rug). We ask you, What about it?

WATERMELONS that grow in size like stories about the fish that got away are a bad buy for most household consumers, say experts in the Department of Agriculture. Best value comes in a melon that can be consumed by the family at a single slicing. A melon cut before it is

chilled loses quality, and flavor disappears from left-overs. Agriculture's breeding experts at their laboratory near Charleston, S. C., are working now on developing a watermelon to fit the average refrigerator. This is one of the thousands of useful scientific jobs which agriculture's Department is doing for consumers. We tell of another of its melon researches in our story on cantaloups in this issue.

ANOTHER boon to farmers and relief families was announced by AAA on April 8, when it accepted bids from 17 companies to supply a total of 7,480,000 pounds of surplus dry skim milk. For 3½ years AAA has been buying up surplus supplies such as these for two purposes: To relieve the pressure on farm prices, and to add nourishing foods to the slim diets of families still dependent on government for part or all of their living. Well over 2½ billion pounds of food have traveled this route to relief family kitchens. . . We reported first egg purchases for this year in our February 8 issue. Latest report of AAA, on April 5, shows more than 8,345,000 dozen eggs, involving an expenditure slightly over \$2,000,000. . . Purchases of fresh grapefruit and canned grapefruit juice, too, have been important two-way relief items. From Texas canners close to 400,000 cases were purchased by March 21. Fresh fruit bought from Texas growers up to March 5 this season totaled 1,177 cars. . . All such purchases by AAA are turned over to the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation which distributes them to State relief organizations which in turn see that the foods get to needy families. . . In 1936 nearly 900,000,000 pounds, made up of AAA purchases and foods obtained by State agencies for this purpose, were added to relief family diets. This meant an average of about 30 pounds per month for a family. Included in the 1936

total were 18,800,000 pounds of meat and meat products; 213,000,000 pounds of cereals and flour; 430,000,000 pounds of canned, fresh, and dried fruits and vegetables; 19,000,000 pounds of milk and cheese; 9,000,000 pounds of butter, sugar, sirup.

NUMEROUS "economic cheats" were uncovered by the Federal Food and Drug Administration's activities during February, its monthly report reveals. (See "Policing Foods for Humans and Animals" in our February 22, 1937, issue.) Seizure was made by the Administration of 3,372 packages of pecan meats in baskets with false bottoms, with the net weight statement inconspicuously displayed on the under side of the container; 456 jars of preserves and jellies low in fruit content; 910 cans of so-called lemon juice, diluted with water; 1,600 pounds of thyme leaves from which most of the flavoring constituents had been extracted; 1,800 sacks of potatoes labeled as of a grade higher than their condition warranted; 390 jars of mustard sauce containing added gum and mustard bran, without any label declaration of their presence; 564 pounds of so-called malted milk found to contain a fat other than butterfat. In addition, 38 cans of cane syrup and 96 cans of sorghum syrup, both short of the declared net contents, and 21 cases of canned soaked dry peas which had on the labels a vignette of fresh green peas and the word "dry" inconspicuously placed, were seized. The following canned goods were seized because they fell below the prescribed legal minimum standards of quality and condition without label notification of that fact: 365 cases of canned cherries, 1,080 of tomatoes, and 295 of peas.

"Human erosion is just as serious as soil erosion, and one of the most important items in preventing human erosion is plenty of good food."

HENRY A. WALLACE,  
Secretary of Agriculture.

# MELONS

## *Come to*

# Market

May is the month for melons to start to market. Cantaloups come first. Here are some buying tips for enthusiasts of this and other popular melon types



**T**O CONSUMER palates, quality in cantaloups means flavor. To consumer pocketbooks, trying to buy well-flavored cantaloups is often a gamble.

Consumers have different ways of selecting this welcome fruit—a source of Vitamins A, B, and C. To judge a melon's ripeness is comparatively easy. Yellowish color beneath the netted surface of some melons, a characteristic musky odor, the blossom end of the fruit yielding to pressure from the thumb, these are indications of ripeness, but not of flavor. If a melon has been picked green and ripened en route to the consumer, it may be flavorless. Ripening on healthy vines is the secret of well-flavored melons.

Best consumer test for detecting a vine-ripened cantaloup is to examine the stem scar. If the scar is smooth, clean, and cuplike it means that the melon was picked at "full-slip" or when ripe enough for the fruit to separate easily from the stem. A melon picked at "half-slip"—or at a less ripe stage—will have some of the stem still adhering. If there is a little secretion of sugar around the stem scar—it is a pretty good indication that the melon is sweet.

In 1932 and 1933 consumers bought less cantaloups than they did in the twenties. "Depression" is one obvious reason—but the fact that too many melons, picked green and of poor quality, had been reaching the market was interpreted as an important reason for the decreasing demand. Today by improved methods of grading, shipping, and packing, the large western producers are aggressively tackling this problem of getting vine-ripened melons to consumers a long distance from growing centers.

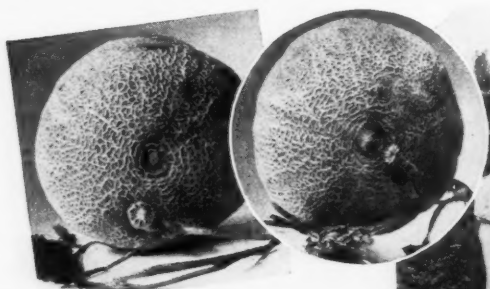
Americans are accustomed to buying many varieties of muskmelons under the trade name "Cantaloups." In reality the cantaloup is a variety of muskmelon common in Italy but not commonly grown in this country. Cantaloup seeds, imported from Armenia, were first cultivated in western Europe in the vicinity of the Castle of Cantalupo, in Italy. We have borrowed the name and use it as a blanket term for many different varieties of muskmelons.

Some varieties of muskmelons consumers know by their correct names. Among them are the Honeydew, the Casaba, and the Persian, sometimes called the Santa Claus. Such melons are larger than cantaloups with

more or less smooth rinds which are not netted or deeply ribbed, though sometimes they are furrowed. Their flesh is sweet and juicy, with a whitish, yellowish, or greenish tinge. Another melon, popular in the United States in recent years, is the Honeyball—a cross between the Texas Cannon Ball and Honeydew. Its fruit is round, slightly larger than the Netted Gem and the flesh is thick and green in color.

Over 25 States produce melons in large enough quantities to be shipped to other markets, but the biggest growing centers are in California, Colorado, and Arizona, certain sections of which have climates comparable to the valleys of Southern Asia, the original home of the melon. California alone ships more than half the Nation's market supply of cantaloups and Honeydews. Winter melons, such as the Casaba and Persian, are grown almost exclusively in the West.

Melon season begins in May and lasts well into October, with winter melons, such as the Santa Claus, trickling into the market well into December. In May, western cantaloups come to market. They are followed by cantaloups grown in smaller producing centers along the



When a cantaloup is picked practically ripe or at the "full-slip" stage, the stem comes clean from the melon leaving a cuplike hole. A portion of stem clings to the cantaloup when it is picked at the "half-slip" stage or before full maturity has been reached.



Pickers soon learn to judge the ripeness of a cantaloup by its appearance. The netting on a mature melon hardens and assumes a whitish color, and the dull-green color of the skin usually turns to a lighter shade of green which takes on a yellowish tint as the fruit ripens. In the large western fields bags strapped over the shoulder are generally used for gathering melons. When these are filled they are emptied into crates which are carried at once to the packing shed.

Atlantic Coast in the States of Delaware and Virginia, and still later by those grown in Indiana and Michigan. As a rule, the supply of cantaloups is most plentiful in June when shipments from California usually are heaviest, though seasonal conditions may bring the California crop to maturity as early as the last week in May. Honeydews grown in the same district as cantaloups ripen from 3 to 4 weeks later. Honeyballs come still later and the Casaba does not usually appear on the market till the latter part of September and October.

Prices consumers pay for melons vary a great deal depending on the supply on the market and proximity of the market to growing centers. New York consumers pay more for their California melons as a rule than those in mid-western cities because of the expense of transportation. However, consumers in large cities have a longer melon season. By far the greatest percentage of carlot shipments go to the metropolitan centers than is the case with other important fruits and vegetables. In 1930, 62 percent and in 1931, 60 percent of the carlot shipments of cantaloups and other muskmelons went to cities with populations of over a million people. Consumers in rural com-

munities may find their melon season confined largely to the summer months when home-grown melons are ripe and are sold on the local market.

Varieties of muskmelons found in one's favorite grocery store depend on geography. In many sections of the country a certain variety of muskmelon may be grown and be popular among local consumers, though it is not cultivated for the commercial markets because of its poor shipping qualities. It may be as fine or finer in flavor than many of the varieties which have been developed for sale at distant markets. In certain sections of New Jersey, for instance, the Jenny Lind, a locally grown melon, is much in demand. The Tiptop group of muskmelons is common in Indiana and Illinois where they are grown. The Netted Gem group, developed for the most part at Rocky Ford, Colo., is grown extensively for the commercial market. Hales' Best and Hearts of Gold varieties are now popular with large growers because of their excellent shipping qualities.

Bureau of Plant Industry of the United States Department of Agriculture has developed a new mildew resistant variety of muskmelon, called the M. R. No. 45, which is cultivated extensively in California. The M. R. No. 45 can be ripened on the vine, and then when properly precooled and refrigerated in transit will carry in good condition to markets 9 or 10 days distant. Resistance to mildew is the reason for this variety's increasing popularity. Often mildew killed the vines before the melons could ripen. Consequently melons were picked green and immature and were flavorless when they reached the consumers' dinner table.

Melons require a rather long growing period with plenty of soil moisture up to the time of ripening and then long periods of heat and dry weather. One hundred twenty to 140 days of good growing weather is considered necessary for the production of muskmelons, though if both weather and soil condition are exceptionally good, the crop may mature within 100 days. Heavy rains during the ripening period



mean worry to the producer. Moisture at the wrong time affects the flavor and keeping qualities of a crop. It also aids the development of leaf diseases which growers are constantly fighting.

Only a small portion of the grower's worries are over when he has successfully raised his crop. Gathering, handling, and packing are of the utmost importance if he is to get a good price for his labor. Stage of maturity at which melons are picked depends on the time elapsed before they reach the consumer. When motor-truck transportation is used and melons will reach the retail market the day after they have been harvested, they can usually be allowed to ripen on the vines. However, melons from the West do not reach the eastern market for at least a week or 10 days after they have been gathered. Even in refrigerator cars melons will ripen in transit. Though most melons sent from West to East are picked at the half-slip or hard-ripe stage, some of the large California growers, using the "precooled" shipping method succeed in sending vine-ripened melons to New York. Precooling means simply that the temperature of the refrigerator car is reduced to 45 or 50 degrees after it is loaded and before it begins its trek across the country. This rapid change in temperature takes the heat out of the melons at once so that they stay at the same stage of ripeness for several days.

Precooling of vine-ripened Honeydews is not as common as precooling of cantaloups and Honeyballs, possibly because the Honeydew is a better keeping melon. Both Honeydews and Honeyballs, when vine-ripened, take on a cream or light yellow shade; but the change from greenish to lighter shade is somewhat dependent on soil conditions and cannot be a sure consumer test of ripeness. However, vine-ripened Honeydews and

Honeyballs have a softening at the blossom end, the ridges adjacent to the stem are well rounded and smooth, and the odor is characteristic of a ripe melon. Honeydews are usually clipped from the vine leaving about one-half inch stem attached to the melon.

Honeyballs and Honeydews are slower in maturing than cantaloups. In hot weather, Honeydew fields are gone over three or four times a week, but during the height of the ripening season for cantaloups, that crop is harvested at least once, sometimes two or three times a day. Many growers do their picking early in the morning before the melons become heated, or when the crop is to be sent by motor truck, they are gathered at sundown and sent on their way the same night.

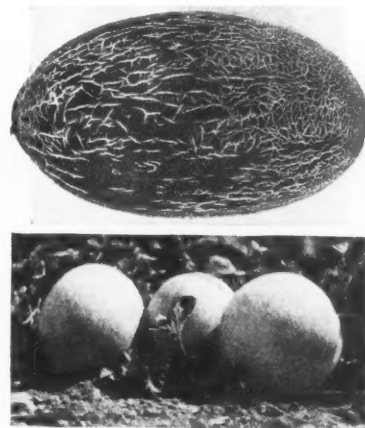
Development of motor transportation and increase of automobile travel have stimulated roadside marketing of melons. Often these roadside stalls do a flourishing business, handling vine-ripened melons grown in the surrounding 60- to 100-mile area.

Little time as possible must be lost in packing and grading melons for market. In the large growing centers of the West, melons are often trucked directly from the field to the central packing shed which is usually on a railroad siding. Here they are graded, packed, and loaded on the cars. These permanent sheds are used by growers' associations and by western shippers who contract growers for large acreages. The crop is referred to as "shed-pack" in contrast to "field-pack" stock. Field-pack melons mean that the grading and packing has been done in a temporary shed in or near the field. In eastern, southern, and midwestern districts farm buildings are often used, or the work is simply done under the shade of a tree. The important thing is to protect the melons from the sun when once picked and

to get them packed for market as quickly as possible.

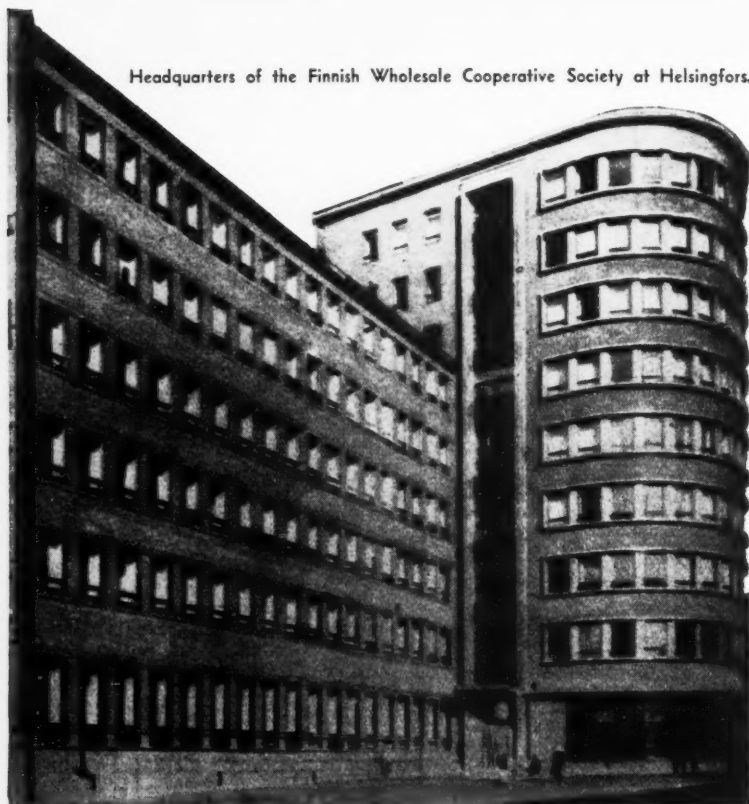
Quality standards have been defined for melons, as for many other fruits and vegetables, by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. These grades help principally growers and the trade, however, because they do not appear on the individual melons as consumers usually buy this fruit. A container of "U. S. No. 1" grade cantaloups must measure up to the following qualifications: The melons must be firm and mature—meaning that they must have reached a stage of development which will insure proper completion of the ripening process. They must be free from cracks, sunburn, decay, and from damage caused by dirt, moisture, hail, disease, and insects. Ten percent by count of the melons may be below the requirements of this grade but not over 5 percent of this tolerance may be allowed for any one defect and no tolerance is allowed for decay.

[Concluded on page 19]



Persian Odessa melon (top), sometimes known as Santa Claus Melon, has best keeping qualities of all winter melons grown in this country. Honeydews (below) are generally considered ready for harvesting when the color of the skin has changed from dark green to a light green or whitish shade and when the skin of the melon loses its slightly fuzzy feel and becomes smooth.

Headquarters of the Finnish Wholesale Cooperative Society at Helsingfors.



Industry and Government are not alone in their researches for better quality in food. Farmers are using their cooperatives to improve the quality of products sold and to put higher standards into practice. Here are some examples culled from a report on European agricultural cooperatives by the International Labor Office in Geneva

# COOPERATING

## *for Better Foods*

**S**TEPPING up the quality of their products has long been a major concern of American farmers. By improving the quality of their products farmers have hit upon a technique that not only assures them of more certain incomes, but one which also enables them to give consumers better values for their money.

Egg cooperatives are a case in point. Scientific methods, adopted by cooperatives, have contributed much to the quality of eggs. Turkeys, walnuts, citrus fruits, apples,

and many other farm products are better quality products today as the result of the cooperative efforts of American farmers.

Agricultural Adjustment Administration in its marketing agreements with growers and shippers has helped to carry on the work started by many cooperatives in encouraging shipments of top-quality foods to markets. We told the story of quality control by marketing agreements in "Another Road to Consumer Standards", in the CONSUMERS'

GUIDE for December 31, 1934.

Side by side with American farm cooperators, European farm cooperators, too, have worked toward better quality foods.

An Englishman, it is said, sitting down to his breakfast egg imported from Denmark, can, if he chooses, tell whose hen in Denmark laid it. Practically every Danish egg sold abroad is rubber stamped with a code number indicating its source.

Danish poultrymen have not always stamped their eggs. There

was a time when Danish farmers would not have dared to identify themselves to the final purchasers of their eggs. Before the establishment of the Danish Egg Cooperative Export Society in 1895 Danish eggs reached the English consumer only after a long and hazardous journey. Farmers sold their eggs to private traders, who in turn sold the eggs to exporters. Sometimes these producers found it to their profit to wait for price increases. While they waited the eggs aged. Sometimes the delay was repeated with the private trader with lamentable results to the quality of this highly perishable food.

Cooperatives in Denmark now collect eggs from cooperators once a week. The eggs are taken to a central depot where each egg is candled. Then they are classified by quality, sorted by size, packed carefully, and shipped to the market as quickly as possible. Twenty-five percent of Danish egg exports are handled by cooperatives in this manner. The cooperative stamp guarantees to the consumer a high-quality egg. Where stamped eggs are known the demand for them has grown.

"Sun" eggs are as famous in Norway as are Danish eggs in Great Britain. They, too, carry a cooperative guarantee. Norwegian cooperators in the Norwegian Consumer Egg Export Association began to stamp eggs 40 years ago with numbers to identify their actual producers. Because of their consistently good quality, so popular did these stamped eggs become that private producers took to stamping their eggs with numbers similar to the cooperative stamps. They failed, however, to make that stamp mean a guarantee of quality.

Cooperators, not content to leave their customers with uncertainty as to the quality of their products, looked to other devices which would help consumers to distinguish their quality eggs. This time they chose

a symbol of the sun to represent top grade. This mark was registered and used on eggs of a guaranteed quality. More recently Government control of eggs has been instituted as the result of the experience of the cooperatives. Standards for "Sun" eggs have come to be used by the Government to define a high quality egg.

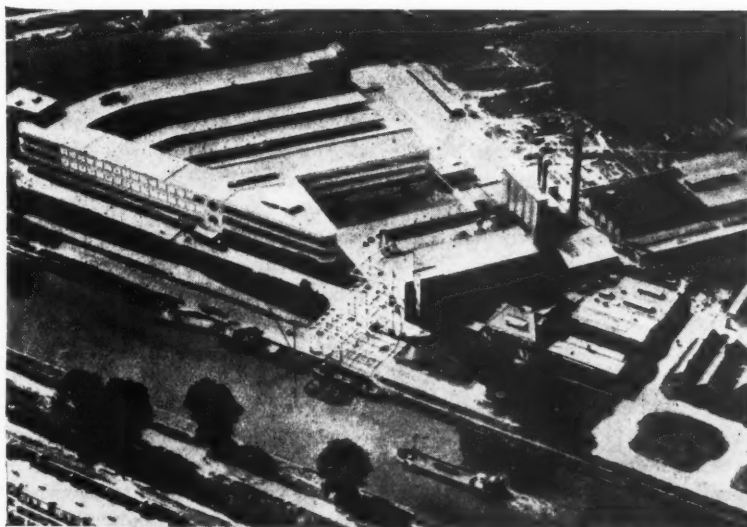
Lur brand butter provides another example of the evolution of legal standards for food from the efforts of cooperatives to improve the quality of their commodities. The Lur brand is the Danish Government's guarantee of the quality of exported butter. No butter may leave Denmark without this brand. The Government's carefulness in the award of the brand has become the consumer's assurance of the high quality of the commodity.

Lur brand came into existence in 1900 as a result of the efforts of the National Association of Dairies, a cooperative of Danish dairy farmers. Until 1906 the right to use the brand was granted to any dairy that agreed to conform to certain standards of butter making. Then, however, a law was passed regulating the use of

the brand. Standards for butter making, first formulated by cooperators, became the basis of legal definitions of quality. Numbered labels issued to dairies and creameries measuring up to these legal requirements are affixed to their products thus enabling governmental authorities to trace all butter to its source in the event of complaints.

Only pasteurized cream can be used in making Lur brand butter, which may not contain more than 16 percent water, nor less than 80 percent butterfat. No preservative other than common salt may be used. Adulterants and aniline dyes are forbidden. Furthermore, the butter must satisfy certain minimum standards of flavor and appearance.

Butter from all dairies is examined periodically by three judges. In making its inspection, this board examines samples which are held until the butter is the same age as the butter as it is sold to consumers. If the butter is judged of inferior quality its producer is advised to consult with a Government expert in butter making. This expert, whose services are free, inspects the producer's dairy in an attempt to discover the cause



The Dutch Cooperative Wholesale Society owns these factories at Utrecht.



"All cooperators have the same rights", "The cooperative motto: The best quality, exact weight, fair price" . . . two of the slogans used on posters displayed in French cooperative establishments.

for the inferior product. After the dairy expert has been consulted a period of grace is given to enable the producer to correct the condition responsible for the faulty butter. The butter is then judged again and if it remains inferior on its second testing the right to the use of the brand together with the right to export his product is denied to the producer. In cases of violation of specific regulations the producer may be punished by fines, imprisonment, or the seizure of his products.

Mere brand marks do not make good butter; stamps do not improve the quality of eggs. There are symbols of cooperative efforts to improve quality at every stage of the life of a farm product from the farm to the consumer. Complete information on the work which agricultural cooperatives are doing to improve food quality has not yet been compiled. Examples of such activities in this article are drawn chiefly from a publication of the International Labor Office, "The Cooperative Movement and Better Nutrition." These exam-

ples are intended only to indicate the variety and scope of the measures cooperatives have undertaken.

Once cheese in Finland was a product of rule of thumb methods. Today, Valio, the export organization of all dairy cooperatives in Finland, maintains two cheese-making institutes where cheese makers are trained in scientific methods. At its five-story laboratory it maintains a staff of chemists and bacteriologists who study cheese making and the bacteria which ferment milk to produce cheese. Valio, which handles 58 percent of Finland's cheese exports, not only makes available to producers the latest scientific methods, it also seeks to improve food quality by rewarding dairymen who produce milk, butter, and cheese of high quality, and by penalizing those who produce inferior products. Bonuses are given to cheese makers whose cheeses are judged to be of high quality. Money prizes and certificates are awarded to dairymen who develop improved methods of dairying. As in Norway and Den-

mark, the Finnish dairy cooperatives first regulated the manufacture of dairy products. From 1905 to 1913 the only supervised butter in Finland was that produced by the cooperatives. In 1913 when the Government passed a law providing for supervision over all butter it based the provisions of its law on those of the cooperative.

Danish Cooperative Bacon Factories, which slaughter 85 percent of all the hogs raised in Denmark, control the quality of the bacon produced in their factories by paying farmers for pigs according to quality. Production of inferior meat is punished by reduced prices, with the result that today farmers take great care to raise only first-class pigs. Farmers are instructed to provide fresh air for their pigs, to disinfect pigsties, and to inspect their pigs regularly to prevent diseased animals from infecting healthy ones. All pigs are carefully examined by veterinary surgeons, and faulty animals are either wholly or partially rejected as unfit for human consumption.

In Holland the Union of Consumer Dairy Societies gives examinations and diplomas to dairy technicians. In 22 years it has had more than 3,400 candidates at its examinations and has issued 1,400 diplomas.

Decorations and medals go to cooperative farmers as well as soldiers in Lithuania. The Central Union of Cooperative Dairies there each year has a competition in which the three prize winning milk producers receive decorations from the hand of the President of the Republic.

Norwegian butchers whose meats appear on the market in a top condition receive quality prizes from their cooperative, the Norwegian Central Union for the Marketing and Export of Pork Bacon. Diplomas are awarded to producers of quality products, and an additional amount per pound over the market price is paid for high quality pork.



Food begins with the soil and the seed, and the cooperatives take active measures to improve both. Valio, the Finnish cooperative society dairy expert, supplies cooperators with bacteria from its laboratory for the improvement of their soil. Twenty-five thousand acres of meadowland have been enriched by the use of nitrogen-producing bacteria; 10,000 of these acres have been converted into model pasture land.

Seed cooperatives supply farmers with selected seed in almost every European country. These cooperatives maintain experimental stations where new plants and selected strains are developed. When Czechoslovakian barley growers were faced with the loss of their export barley trade as the result of changing tastes in beer, Selecta, their seed cooperative, developed a new barley which enabled them to retain their market.

Danish growers, before the formation of their Danish Agricultural Seed Supply Association, discovered that clover seed purchased from private seed merchants often contained as much as 30 percent powdered quarry stone. Good seed was adulterated with poor or dead seed. Today, through their seed cooperative, they secure high quality tested seed. The cooperative also encourages farmers to exchange selected tested seeds with each other.

Diseases of plants and animals are the enemy both of good quality commodities and farmers' incomes. Here on an international scale the agricultural cooperatives have displayed their effectiveness. Scientific disease and pest control is expensive, and even though governments maintain laboratories and experts, often the application of the knowledge thus acquired is too expensive for the individual farmer. The loss from diseased animals, too, often bears ruinously on individual farmers. French cooperative societies condemn cooperators' diseased cattle and compen-



One of the two new creameries recently built by the Scottish Cooperative Wholesale Society. This one is located at Stranaer, Scotland.

sate them for their loss. Farmers and consumers are thus insured, the farmer against loss and the consumer against contaminated foods. Farmers' cooperatives provide this insurance in Denmark and Luxembourg as well as in France.

Improvement of animal stock is also a minor concern of cooperatives. First-class hogs must be bred to produce first-class bacon or pork. Cows must be bred to produce milk with a high butterfat content. To improve the quality of milk in Denmark records are kept of 545,833 cows, 35 percent of all the cows in the country. The kind and amount of feed consumed by each animal is recorded and checked against its milk production, and the quality of its milk is noted. Exceptionally high-grade animals are then selected for breeding purposes. Thoroughbred bulls are placed at the disposal of all cooperators. Similarly, horse-, pig-, and sheep-breeding societies provide the same services to their members.

Changing consumer tastes present farmers with additional problems. Smaller cattle are now raised in Great Britain than formerly, since housewives prefer smaller roasts today. Denmark once produced fat, heavy pigs for the German market,

but suddenly as a result of trade conditions the market was closed to Danish growers. Farmers found themselves raising a type of pig for which there was no market. Through the work of their breeding experts, however, a leaner, longer, lighter pig was developed, one suitable for bacon, which enabled Danish growers then to enter the English market.

Influence of agricultural cooperatives on food standards has been greater than the actual volume of their business. Although only 25 percent of Danish export eggs are cooperatively produced, all eggs exported must maintain the standards originally set by cooperatives. Danish butter, bacon, and eggs, Norwegian eggs, Finnish butter, milk, and cheese, all these products are now subject to Government legislation as the result of the pioneering of agricultural cooperatives.

Consumers' cooperatives in Belgium, Finland, France, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia buy farm products today only from agricultural cooperatives. Recognition is thus given by both the consuming and producing cooperators to their identity of interest, and today more and more they are working together that both may benefit.



## GROCERY CLERKS TEST THEIR KNOWLEDGE

A MOVIE started the idea. It was a picture showing what happened in a certain Weights and Measures bureau. Evidently it was an eye-opener to the community for after its showing the local guardian of full measures was kept busy for days answering all the questions and complaints that flooded in on him.

So amazed at the ignorance of the work of his office was this Virginia official of Weights and Measures, he felt that something ought to be done! First thing he observed was that many of the mistakes which had come to light—thanks to the new interest consumers took in one of their most important local government services—could be traced to the ignorance of clerks in the stores. Here, decided the official, is where education should start.

**—the novel technique used by a Virginia Weights and Measures official to protect consumers in his city against short weights**

Most communities in this country have an officer in charge of weights and measures. He may be a county, township, or city official. Sometimes he is called a "sealer"; sometimes, a "Commissioner of Weights and Measures", or some similar name. How broad his powers and duties are varies from State to State. How well he does his job depends on how good a job consumers want him to do.

If the packages that go into consumer market baskets are to be hon-

est in weight and fill, sellers of goods must know the rules and regulations of local and national governments on correct weighing, on proper labeling of weights, on proper fill of containers. Most apt to be well informed are manufacturers, distributors, retailers. Big gaps sometimes show up in clerks' store of facts about official regulations.

Setting out to remedy this ignorance in local store clerks, the official worked up a contest plan. His plan was this: All the grocery clerks of the city were to be invited to enter a contest to see which one of them could best answer 24 questions testing their wits and knowledge of Weights and Measures work. A clerk with a perfect score would get 250 points—10 points for each correct answer, 5 for neatness, and 5 for clarity in reply.

Prizes were to be offered—\$20 for the best paper, \$10 for second best, \$7.50 for third. Two weeks for replies were to be allowed.

Before launching his contest plan, the official talked it over with the grocers of the city. Many of them were quick to give their approval. One local wholesaler sitting in on the meeting told how a deal, which meant dollars to him and better values to the customer, came about because his salesman had learned the habit of reading labels.

"I was selling a certain hotel mackerel by the tub," he recounted. "One of my men, endeavoring to secure another order from this hotel, was informed that they had a better price. There was a difference of 50 cents a tub. The salesman in his efforts to make a sale visited the hotel and found the very same brand of mackerel, but he read the label and found it stated 40 mackerel, while his tub contained 50. With mackerel selling at 3 for 25 cents, in shifting its purchases the hotel was losing 4 mackerel instead of saving 50 cents."

Here are the 24 questions which the Weights and Measures official, with the backing of the grocers, posed for the grocery clerks:

1. What is weight?
2. What is money?
3. What does the stock in your store represent?
4. What difference is there between a bank teller and grocery clerk?
5. Which is of most importance: Correct weight or correct change?
6. Who is affected the most by an intentional short weight, the clerk or the purchaser? Why?
7. At what point on the scales should the indicator or hand be when the scale is not in use?
8. Can anyone who is not blind help seeing that the scale is out of balance?
9. Where should a scale be placed in the store, and why?

10. What lesson or lessons can you learn from the goldfish?

11. How should all commodities not liquid be sold?

12. How should liquid commodities be sold?

13. When may dry measures be used?

14. What is the difference in a store-prepared package and an original package and how should they be marked?

15. What is meant by net weight? Give an example.

16. What percentage of your customers pay attention to the weighing of their purchases?

17. What percentage of your customers pay attention to the labels?

18. A miller had a stone which weighed 40 pounds. A bad boy let the stone fall and it was broken into 4 pieces. The miller discovered that with the 4 pieces he could weigh anything from 1 pound to 40 pounds. What was the weight of each stone?

19. Why do we have Weights and Measures officials?

20. What should be done to a scale before it is put into use?

21. What should be done with a scale that gets out of order after it is sealed; should you wait for the inspector?

22. What relationship should exist between the proprietor, the clerk, and purchaser? Give an illustration.

23. In what manner may the following articles be sold: (1) oysters, (2) cheese, (3) turnips, (4) apples, (5) butter, (6) fish, (7) eggs, (8) vinegar, (9) hams, and (10) sauerkraut?

24. Should a dirty scale be condemned? Why?

Although the judges had a sample sheet of correct answers to guide them through this rich mixture of fact and fancy, latitude was allowed the contestants for originality and clear thinking. There was much scratching of heads and biting of pencils before the clerks consigned

their entries to the mails. One question, at first glance wholly unrelated to the merchandising field, taxed the wits of many, left others as much at sea as the animal under discussion. To the question, "What lesson or lessons can you learn from the goldfish?", the prize winner submitted: "The gold fish keeps his scales clean and bright, the grocery clerk should do likewise. The gold fish swims around in a circle, exactly what the clerk should not do."

Seven contestants came a cropper over the query: "Which is the most important: Correct weight or correct change?" and were caught in the admission that correct weight is more important than correct change. The shopper who buys from these clerks had best count her pennies. All gave correctly the relationship which should exist between the proprietor, clerk, and purchaser—one of mutual benefit.

Correct answers, prepared by the Bureau of Weights and Measures, were given as follows:

1. Weight is a measure of the force of gravity tending toward the center of the earth.
2. A medium of exchange.
3. Its equivalent in money.
4. A bank teller handles money and a clerk handles its equivalent.
5. Equal importance.
6. Clerk. Because he sells his birthright with the short weight.
7. At zero.
8. No.
9. In full view of the customers. They have a right to see the weighing as well as the clerk.
10. Goldfish keep their scales clean and live in the clear.
11. By weight, count, head, or bunch.
12. By liquid measure.
13. By mutual agreement in writing, and standard hampers, berries and small fruit in climax baskets.
14. A store-prepared package is prepared in store by clerk before sale.

An original package is prepared by the manufacturer. Both should be marked with their net contents in a clear and distinct manner.

15. Net weight is the commodity itself; no paper, carton, box, or other covering can be included. One pound of butter net is butter free from tray or other covering.

16. ....

17. ....

18. One, three, nine, and twenty-seven pounds, respectively (there might be other weights).

19. To regulate methods of sales and to protect buyer and seller.

20. It should be inspected and sealed.

21. It should be repaired and resealed. No.

22. Fairness; justice to each.

23. (1) liquid measures, (2) net weight, (3) count, weight, or bunch, (4) count or weight, (5) net weight, (6) weight or count, (7) weight or count, (8) liquid measure, (9) net weight, and (10) net weight.

24. Yes, as it causes inaccuracy.

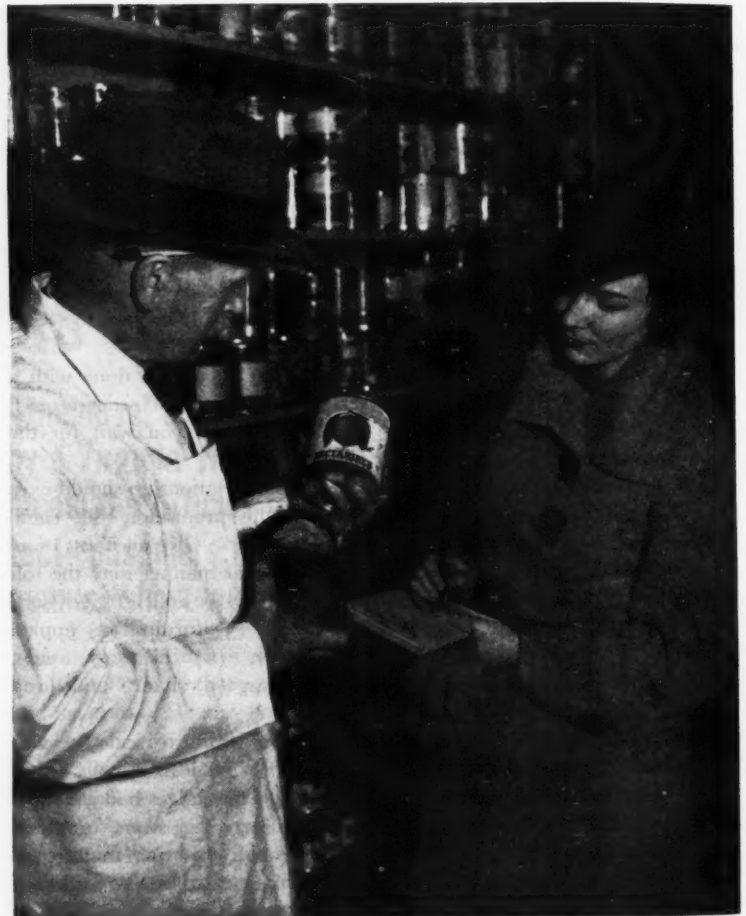
"What percentage of your customers pay attention to the weighing of their purchases?" brought this commentary on consumer shopping habits: Customers who watched the weighing and read the labels ranged from 5 percent to 95 percent throughout the city. The percentage varied in different sections—63 percent of the people of the north side watching the scales and labels as against a bare 10 percent on the south side. In this latter district it would seem that the consumer rather than the salesman was in need of a program of education.

In fact, just such a consumer contest is being planned by the League of Housewives of Richmond for the benefit of their members. So suc-

cessful has the Bureau of Weights and Measures judged the grocery clerk's contest that it is busy formulating questions for the second of its series of examinations—this time for service station operators and attendants. Perhaps other cities will take a leaf from the book of this Virginia city and scatter sets of questions that will send their customers and salespeople to brushing up their knowledge of these standards of pioneers in buying and selling.

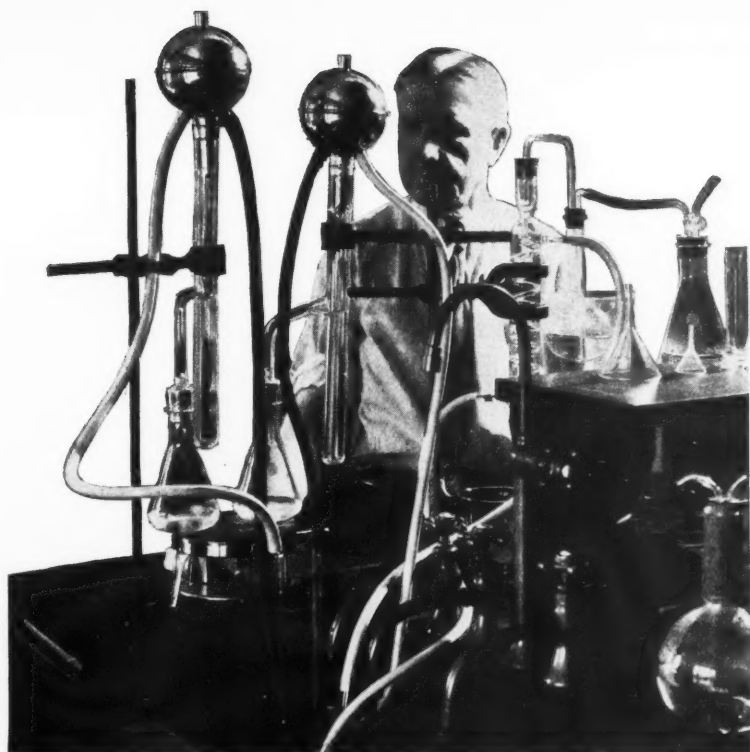
Best way to get posted on weights and measures is to call on the weights

and measures official in your own community. For background reading in preparation for this visit we suggest a booklet issued by the National Bureau of Standards which describes the functions of a weights and measures official. Included also is a model State law on the subject of weights and measures. Title of this handy little volume is "Weights and Measures Administration", by Ralph W. Smith. Address: Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Price 70 cents, by post-office money order.



Most States and many municipalities have laws or regulations requiring packaged foods to be marked with the net weight of the contents of the package. Do you know what the laws in your community are?





## WHAT KIND OF SAFEGUARDS?

Control over the wholesomeness, quality, and labeling of foods by the Federal Government takes many forms. During the past three years, the **CONSUMERS' GUIDE** has separately described many of these various types of control. Here we summarize them in one article to give our readers a comparative picture of Government on the food front

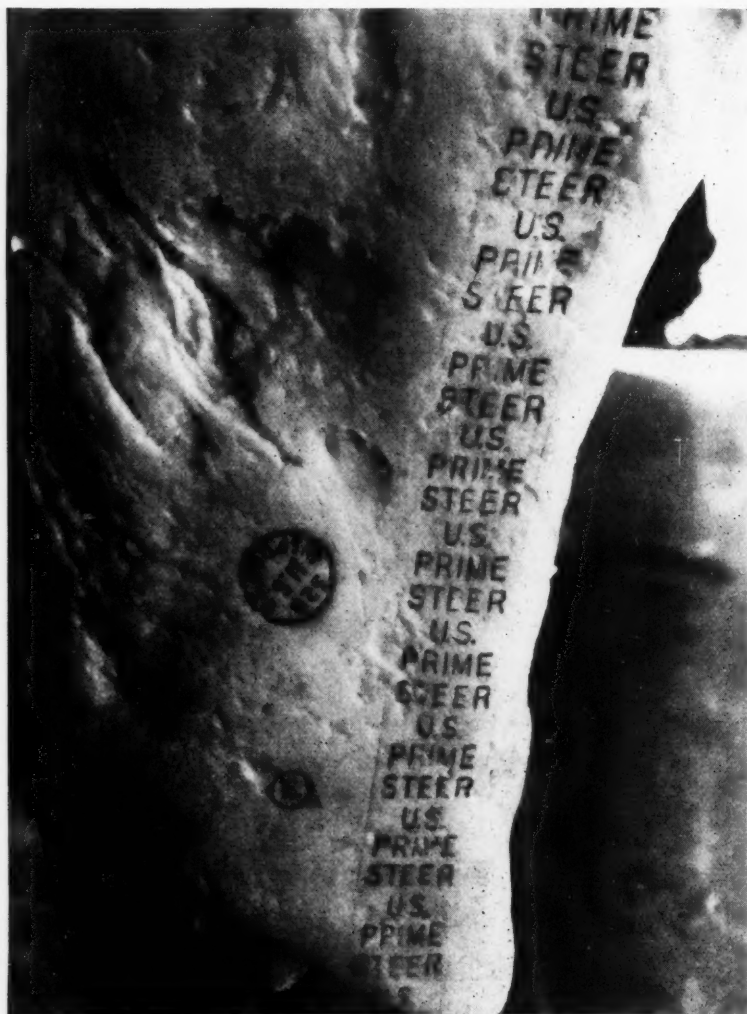
**F**EDERAL safeguards for the household buyer of foods and beverages fall into four distinct categories: Supervision of the manufacture of a product, regulation and policing of statements on labels, establishment of quality standards, and policing of products after they are placed on sale.

Some of these safeguards are there to be used if a manufacturer chooses; others are mandatory. Protection may occur at the point of manufac-

ture or it may not be operative until goods appear on the market and someone questions them or their labels. In some cases the regulation of statements on labels is positive in requiring the truth to be stated; in others it is negative in barring falsehoods from the label. Some standards are concerned solely with the wholesomeness of a product; others are concerned with differences in quality of goods which are accepted as wholesome. Some quality stand-

ards merely define a minimum grade; others define gradations from highest to lowest.

Only laws to require the inspection of food products during processing are the United States Meat Inspection Act of March 4, 1907, and acts supplemental thereto. First Federal Meat Inspection Act was passed in 1890 at the request of the meat-packing industry. American meat at the time was denied entry to many foreign countries because it was unac-



More consumers are asking for, and more dealers are offering, Government quality graded meats. This piece of beef has been inspected by a Department of Agriculture grader and stamped as "U. S. Prime Steer," top quality in beef grades.

company by a Government certification of its wholesomeness. To secure these foreign markets for their products American meat packers asked for the establishment of a Federal Meat Inspection Service. This law applied chiefly to exported meat and meat products. The present basic Meat Inspection Act came into being as the result of the widespread public demand for better protection to United States consumers.

This law provides for inspection at the source—that is, for Federal su-

pervision of the entire process of manufacture. Every product bearing the approval stamp of the United States Meat Inspection Service has been derived from animals slaughtered at and the meat processed in a federally approved plant, by federally approved methods, of federally inspected ingredients, under the direct supervision of a Federal inspector. The full cost of this inspection is paid by the Government and costs less than seven one-hundredths of a cent per pound of meat.

Today all meats and meat products—except those produced and sold by farmers and under special conditions by retail butchers and dealers—prepared for the channels of interstate commerce must bear the round purple stamp or other mark of inspection. These approved stamps and other marks of inspection to show that the article has been United States Inspected and Passed are a guarantee of wholesomeness. They signify nothing concerning the tenderness or flavor of the meat.

Imported meats and meat products are subject to the same regulations as domestic manufactures. During 1936 more than 170 million pounds of meat and meat-product imports were inspected by the Meat Inspection Service; 626 thousand pounds were refused entry to the United States, either because they were unfit for consumption or because they were adulterated, misbranded, or otherwise below United States standards.

Not all meat and meat products found in butcher shops are processed under the supervision of the Federal Government. Only about two-thirds of meats and meat products sold at retail are examined by the United States Meat Inspection Service. The remaining one-third is subject to inspection, if it exists, by local and State authorities. For complete protection consumers must look to their own States and cities for adequate laws and effective inspection services, as well as for the United States legend.

Poultry and poultry products do not come under the mandatory provisions of the Meat Inspection Act. No law requires the processors of poultry products to have Federal inspection of their plants. Nor are they required to have sanitary inspection of their products. But today most canned chicken products bear the legend "U. S. Inspected and Certified by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States De-

partment of Agriculture." Full-drawn chickens sold in some cities, too, are likely to bear this mark.

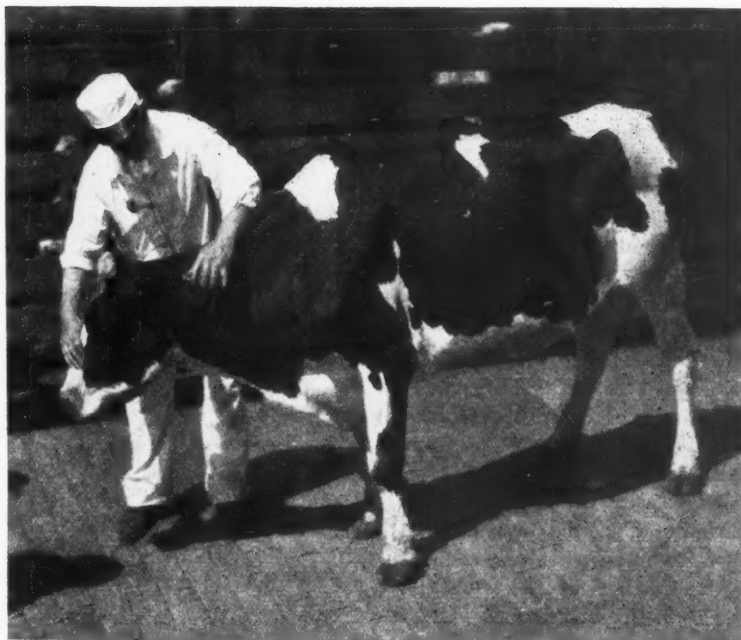
Voluntary action on the part of poultry processors procures this guarantee for consumers. Inspection service is authorized in annual appropriation acts; the act for the current year was approved June 4, 1936. Under this authorization the Department of Agriculture can investigate and certify the class, quality, and condition of certain farm products.

To obtain this inspection service a processor must agree to abide by the regulations of the Department of Agriculture. These regulations are similar to those in effect under the Meat Inspection Act. The processing in poultry plants which have elected to have Government inspection is always supervised by a graduate veterinarian.

Not only the poultry itself is inspected but all ingredients which go into the making of poultry products must also be inspected and approved. Thus an approved chicken soup contains only inspected and approved ingredients, such as rice, celery, condiments. So, too, with all other United States inspected poultry products.

Cost of this service, unlike that of meat inspection, is paid for by the processors, but the supervision and selection of the inspecting staff is under the control of the United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

Inspection of poultry products, like meat inspection, first came into existence as the result of packers' attempts to export their canned poultry products. Some countries refused to accept such exports until they received a certification from the Department of Agriculture as to the wholesomeness of the product. From this beginning the inspection of canned poultry products has spread until today practically all canned poultry products are United States inspected.



Only food which must, by law, be inspected during processing, is meat sold in interstate commerce. The round purple stamp on meat, shown on the beef on the opposite page, means it has come from an animal slaughtered at, and the meat processed in, a federally approved plant, by federally approved methods, under the direct supervision of a Federal inspector.



Not only the product in the can but the label on the can must be inspected and passed by Federal agents in the case of meats sold in interstate commerce. Note, too, the "net weight of contents", required by the Federal Food and Drugs Act on all containers of foods moving in interstate commerce.

Gradual growth of inspection of full-drawn chickens is also noticeable today as the result of ordinances in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and some other cities requiring all chickens shipped into local markets to carry with them inspection certificates.

Shrimp, like poultry and poultry products, are today packed under the supervision of Federal inspectors. Twenty-five thousand cases of uninspected shrimp, with an approximate value of \$100,000, were seized in 1933 by Federal food inspectors before Federal inspection of shrimp canneries was instituted. Each seizure added to the apprehension of the industry, and the consequent falling off in purchases of canned shrimp by distributors reflected a loss of confidence in the wholesomeness of the product. Shrimp packers, alarmed at the decline in sales, then decided that it would be best to have their products inspected at the canneries and to place only safe food on the market. They sponsored the passage of the sea food amendment to the Food and Drugs Act, which gave the Secretary of Agriculture the power to grant the request of any packer of sea food for the service of Federal inspectors to carry out a thoroughgoing and continuous inspection of their plants to prevent the packing or preparation of sea food which is not sound or wholesome or which fails to conform to the requirements of the law. The original amendment provided that the cost of this inspection should be borne by the packers, but in 1935 another amendment was passed to permit the Federal Government to share the cost of this inspection. Neither in that year nor in the following was money appropriated to pay for the Government's share. Despite this fact, so satisfied were the shrimp packers with Federal inspection of their product that they assumed the full cost themselves.



Most canned chicken products bear a Government inspection stamp; full-drawn chickens sold in some cities, too, bear this mark. City ordinances sometimes require all chickens shipped into local markets to carry inspection certificates.

Consumers showed their appreciation of the measures taken to protect them by exhausting packers' stocks of canned shrimp in 1935, although one of the largest packs in the history of the industry had been put up. Canned shrimp put up under rigid inspection requirements is entirely wholesome. No federally inspected products were seized during 1936.

Federally inspected canned shrimp bears the legend "Production Supervised by U. S. Food and Drug Administration" and is the consumers' guarantee of wholesomeness. Shrimp inspection under the plan now in force provides for supervision of

shrimp packing from the boats which trawl these delicious crustaceans from the sea to the final shipping of the canned shrimp from the cannery. At every stage in the packing of shrimp there is a Federal inspector examining not only the shrimp itself but also the method of handling and the workers and machinery used.

Federal shrimp inspectors are Civil Service appointees. They must be college graduates with scientific training, preferably in chemistry or bacteriology. Today a force of 57 inspectors supervises factories in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. The service also main-



tains in New Orleans a chemical and bacteriological laboratory to detect defections that might escape the unaided eyes of inspectors.

No law requires that shrimp packers submit to United States inspection. Their cooperation with the Food and Drug Administration is wholly voluntary; no penalties are imposed upon noncooperating packers. Only compulsion upon packers to obey the inspection regulations is the knowledge of the packer that if he does not cooperate fully the inspection service will be withdrawn. Today 50 of the largest canners in the United States, packing between 90 and 95 percent of all United States shrimp, have United States inspection in their plants. Packers of other sea foods could, if they wished, avail themselves of these inspection services under the provisions of the Food and Drugs acts. To date no other packers have done so.

Number 1 consumer safeguard—the continuous supervision of the manufacture of food products—has been achieved, then, in three separate industries: In the meat and meat-products industry, in the poultry-products industry, and in the shrimp industry. In the first case, the supervision is required; in the latter two it is voluntary.

Consumers do not have X-ray eyes. They must depend on labels to tell them what is inside a can. Federal laws provide for two kinds of label regulation: The approval of a label before it is used, and the policing of labels already in use.

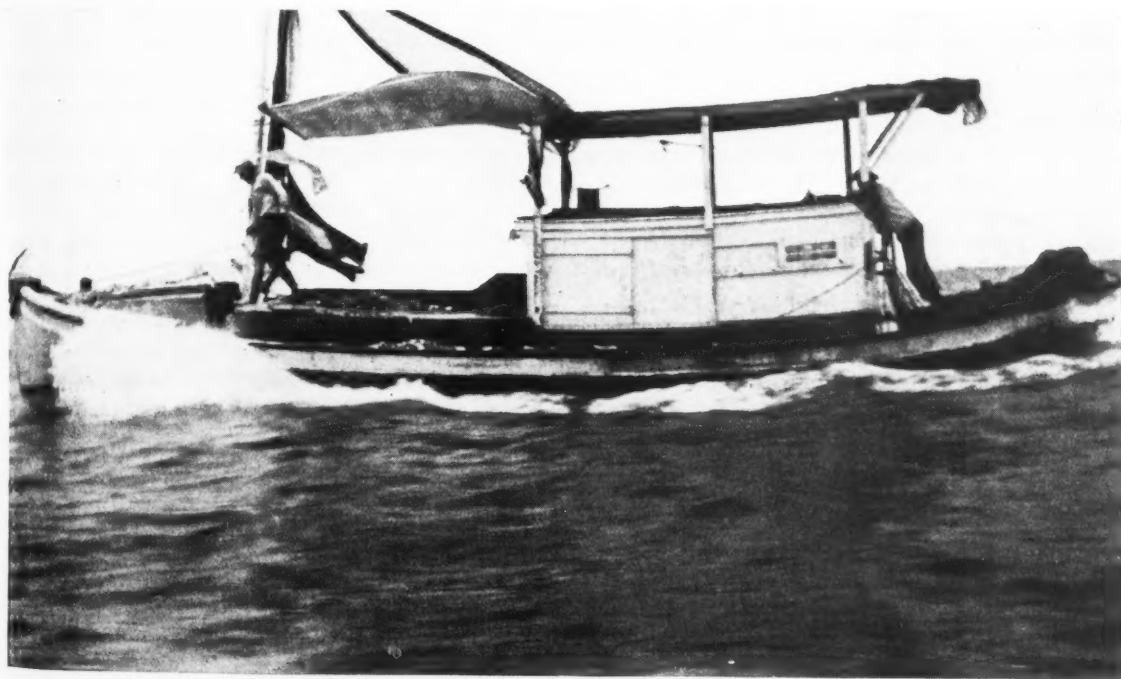
Only two kinds of labels must, by law, be approved before the products on which they are used are offered for sale: Labels on meats and meat products, and labels on distilled spirits. Under the provisions of the Meat Inspection Act all labels for use on meats and meat products

must be approved by the Department of Agriculture before they may be used.

Consumers can require two things of labels. One is that the label tell *all* the facts a buyer should know; the other is that the label should not tell a falsehood. The Department of Agriculture makes the first type of requirement—with one exception—in its control of meat labels. It does not require the label to indicate the *quality* of the contents. It does demand, however, that the label describe the contents of its can or package honestly; a mixture of beef and pork must not be described as beef alone. A meat loaf containing beef, veal, and pork may not be called veal loaf. Or, if it contains more than 50 percent veal, it may be called veal loaf, beef and pork added.

Farm-processed products are prized highly by some consumers. Country

[Continued on page 19]



Voluntary canned shrimp inspection by the Federal Food and Drug Administration covers the product all the way from the boats to the final shipping of the product from the cannery.



OHIO cooperators made history on April 5. For the first time a State-wide conference was held for farm and city consumer cooperative leaders to thresh out their common problems.

Big and little cooperative problems were put under the microscope at this notable gathering where representatives present came from enterprises doing a business all the way from \$1,800 to \$600,000 a year.

Delegations ranging in size from 1 to 16 members came from every corner of the State, from Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Chillicothe, Akron, Dayton, Port Clinton, Dillonvale, Yellow Springs, Lakewood, Troy, Warren, Highland, Westerville, Seneca, Delaware, Marion, Hiram, and Medina.

Present, in addition to city cooperative groups, were at least a half dozen representatives of county farm bureau cooperative associations which are already dealing cooperatively in consumer goods and are thinking of entering the consumer cooperative field more intensively.

Addressing the conference was Murray Lincoln, Executive Secretary of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, who stressed the importance of activities which bring city and farm people together in a common purpose. "Consumers' cooperation", Mr. Lincoln declared, "offers a good opportunity for such action." He assured the group that the Ohio Farm Bureau will continue to render every possible assistance to city cooperatives and called attention to the fact that the Farm Bureau now offers such groups a source

of supply for petroleum products.

Farm and city cooperators together threshed out such problems as these: What kind of delivery service a cooperative should have which serves a large area, how can newly organized cooperatives finance themselves, what should be the labor policies of cooperatives, what kind of contracts should cooperatives have with private firms, how to secure volunteer manpower to promote the cooperative movement, should the use of cooperative label products be promoted, should Ohio cooperatives form a State-wide league, should they establish a cooperative magazine, should they set up a wholesale organization to service retail outlets.

Final answers to all these questions obviously could not be given at a 1-day conference. Most pressing for decision were the last three questions which the conference voted to turn over for consideration to a committee of five to be appointed by the Columbus Consumers Cooperative, Inc., chief promoter of the conference.

How to organize a city cooperative has baffled many groups eager to try this method of making pennies go farther. Mr. E. R. Bowen, speaking at this Ohio farm-consumer conference, gave these rules:

#### I. ORGANIZATION PROGRAM

- (a) A person interested in cooperatives gathers a small group which is interested in promoting cooperatives and forms a cooperative council.
- (b) Study circles are then formed to study various aspects of the co-

operative movement. (Whenever possible make these neighborhood groups.)

- (c) After a thorough education in the various aspects of cooperatives the group should proceed to undertake some kind of cooperative business.

(Another speaker set up the following requirements before setting up a cooperative business: Start with the sale of some product or products where there is a substantial margin of profit, where there is a known friendly supply of goods, and where there is a relatively constant demand.)

#### II. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

- (a) Have membership meetings at least quarterly. See that the programs for these meetings are thoroughly prepared and include a variety of activities, i. e., drama, picnics, and other social affairs.

- (b) Have an active youth organization connected with your cooperative.

- (c) Have an educational program for your employees organization.

- (d) Study circles are the most effective form of cooperative educational activity.

- (e) Sell cooperative literature just as you sell other cooperative products.

- (f) Have a loan library of cooperative books, magazines, and pamphlets.

#### III. PUBLICITY PROGRAM

- (a) Get the cooperative movement discussed from as many public platforms as you can.

- (b) Write up interesting new articles on cooperatives for the local paper.

- (c) Your cooperative should have its own publication.

(d) Do not neglect pictorial methods of publicity, such as posters and movies.

(e) Your cooperative should issue pamphlets describing the services and activities of the organization.

#### IV. PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

(a) Use displays to promote your cooperative.

(b) Have a mailing list for direct mail contacts.

(c) Advertise cooperative services and goods.

(d) Have cooperative affairs discussed over the radio.

#### MELONS COME TO MARKET

[Concluded from page 5]

Cantaloups which fail to rate "U. S. No. 1" are ungraded.

Use of Federal-State inspection service is optional with growers and shippers. During the fiscal year 1935-36, 2,476 carloads of cantaloups, 14 of Honeyballs, 1,023 of Honeydews, were inspected at the shipping point. Shippers pay a small fee for this inspection service, and in return receive certificates showing the grade of the melons. Most growers, though they do not use the Federal-State inspection service, nevertheless grade their melons for size and maturity. Five States, California, Colorado, Delaware, Maryland, and Arizona, have regulations concerning the maturity of melons which can be shipped.

Individual melons are not stamped with a grade mark, and the majority of them are not wrapped. Wrapping each melon is not considered advisable as the papers interfere with the cooling of the melon in the refrigerator car and may cause mold. In a few sections a small label is placed on each melon, or the melon is branded with a shipper's mark. But as marking requires additional handling, this is not always done.

#### WHAT KIND OF SAFEGUARDS?

[Continued from page 17]

sausage, for example, has a savory meaning to many persons. Because such terms as country and farm have a definite meaning to consumers, the Department of Agriculture insists that a product described on a label as "country" or "farm" shall actually be made in the country or on the farm. If the products are prepared in a factory in the same way as country-processed, then they may be described as country style. Philadelphia scrapple has moved some breakfasters to poetry, and scrapple so labeled must actually be Philadelphia-made; otherwise, as in the

use of the words "farm" and "country", the label must say "Philadelphia-style scrapple." In this manner the use of place names, or names descriptive of a particular method of manufacture, are regulated for the protection of consumer and producer alike.

Control of meat labels even extends to graphic description of the contents of a package. A picture of a pig on a can of meat means that the product's major ingredient is pork. Under Federal regulations governing the use of labels for meat and meat products no picture may be used which might lead a consumer to expect something that he doesn't find on opening the can.

[Concluded in Next Issue]

## Our Point of View

*The CONSUMERS' GUIDE believes that consumption is the end and purpose of production*

To that end the CONSUMERS' GUIDE emphasizes the consumer's right to full and correct information on prices, quality of commodities, and on costs and efficiency of distribution. It aims to aid consumers in making wise and economical purchases by reporting changes in prices and costs of food and farm commodities. It relates these changes to developments in the agricultural and general programs of national recovery. It reports on cooperative efforts which are being made by individuals and groups of consumers to obtain the greatest possible value for their expenditures.

The producer of raw materials—the farmer—is dependent upon the consuming power of the people. Likewise, the consumer depends upon the sustained producing power of agriculture. The common interests of consumers and of agriculture far outweigh diversity of interests.

While the CONSUMERS' GUIDE makes public official data of the Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and Commerce, the point of view expressed in its pages does not necessarily reflect official policy but is a presentation of governmental and nongovernmental measures looking toward the advancement of consumers' interests.

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Only a limited number of copies of the CONSUMERS' GUIDE may be printed, and the demand for them is taxing that limit. If your friends, consumer organizations, or schools would find it useful, don't discard your copy when you have finished reading it. Pass it along, and keep it moving. . . . Some Home Demonstration Agents, with whom we checked, reported that an average of 35 consumers saw each of their copies. Can you better that record?



